

The American Cornet solo: Style and Tradition.

There is no *single* way to play the cornet: There as many approaches as there are players. The American solo cornet style is not *just* history. Great traditions have grown in many countries of the world. The differences lie in the equipment used (mouthpieces and instruments), groups performed with (wind band, brass band, orchestra, piano, . . .) the makeup of the audience, the music performed, the professional or amateur status of the players.

The cornet can be a style of playing. Cornet style can be played with many types of instrument - even trumpet!. The cornet can be a type of music. The cornet can play loud and soft. Legato or staccato..

The essence of the music is vocal in nature: A *lyrical* singing approach is essential for this music. Bel Canto, coloratura singing, or even Irish tenor are common sources for the cornetist to emulate. Distinguished practitioners following Arban's example have recommended listening to soloists who play other instruments and to great singers.

Many of the best well-known and loved solos are Fantasies with Variations based on popular operas. This is no accident. They were written to teach us to play in the style of the greatest singers in the world. Often the Fantasies are a series of arias with a single variation thrown in at the end to please the player and impress the audience with the unique technical virtues of the cornet. Even in the solos that consist of a series of variations from a single theme, often the greatest musical interest is centered in the opening slow portion of the solo.

Study of the body of works for cornet solo will show that variation form is not the dominant form used. Common forms used were dance related including the Waltz or Polka, folk music (often from the "old country", well loved hymns, love songs and the Patriotic - Of the above forms only the **folk music** (as in the "Harp of Tara") commonly inspired the variation treatment.

The common relegation of the cornet solo to mindless and often boring variations, is largely a result of the success of the Arban Complete Conservatory method. with its dozen solos - of which only two of three are frequently performed today in public. But almost everyone tries to study them at a stage in their musical development where they cannot grasp the depth of the music. Many of theses works are from on operas that the typical young player today has never heard. Of greater musical interest to the student of Arban's music is the series of a dozen solos based on the works of Giuseppe Verdi.

*To play these works properly it is imperative to listen to the opera (or a least a good recording of it: **Seeing** a video or DVD is preferable to just simply **listening** to a recording. These are **theatrical** works of great depth. When we perform these works we are **presenting** the opera to an audience - musically portraying the story with its various roles. Properly done, we are singing through are cornets " songs that are of too deep for words" rather than the "low carb" - "lite" version of the music. (. . . All the tunes but with only 50% of the fattening content of the original. . .)*

The cornet was brought to the United States shortly after its invention. The first well known soloists were immigrants to the country. The defining moment for the cornet came in 1856 with Patrick Gilmore in Massachusetts with the performance of the **Wood Up Quickstep**.

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From that time the stage was set. The American Civil War brought the many community bands into great prominence because of their obvious import on moral and motivation. In 1863 Governor Andrew of Massachusetts asked Gilmore to reorganize the state militia bands. In 1864 Gilmore organized the **Grand National Concert** in New Orleans (massed band of 500 musicians with adder drums and bugles and a chorus of 5,00 children!!!), the **National Peace Jubilee** in 1869 in Boston (1,000 piece orchestra, and 10,000 singers!!!!) and the **World Peace Jubilee** in Boston in 1872.(2,000 piece orchestra, chorus of 200,000 voices!!!!)

In 1873 became director of the **22nd Regiment Band** of New York, where he devoted his energies to making it one of the greatest bands in the world. After the Peace Jubilee Concert he listened to performances of great bands from around the World, and turned his attention away from the huge and colossal toward that of musicianship.

Great cornet soloists who played for Gilmore included **Jules Levy, Matthew Arbuckle, Ben Bent, Hermann Bellstedt, Ezra Bagley, Henry Brown, and Herbert L. Clarke.**

Rise and fall of in perception of the cornet soloist.

The Heyday was the period between Civil War and World War I Factors permitting this were the railroads and easy international travel by Steam Ship. This made the to National and International Tours. The beginning was with Antoine Jullien (b. France 1812) who gave a series of concerts in New York and Boston in (1853 - 54) that were hear by awoke Gilmore to the potential of the band to reach large audiences.

The touring bands performances to more people than any ensemble that came before in History.

The U. S. Marine Band Tours under Sousa started in 1892. And were held annually for two months, seven days a week, two or three concerts a day, often for crowds of more than a thousand.

For various reasons the Cornet solo was the primary soloist featured at by the band. ("The King of Instruments") It could be heard outdoors by thousands of people without amplification. It was an instrument capable of virtuoso technique, yet retaining a singing musical sound. Often the encore would be played by a cornet trio.

Rogers and Clarke.

Two of Sousa's first and greatest cornet soloists Herbert L. Clarke (who came from Patrick

Gilmore's band) and Walter B. Rogers (who he was formerly hired by Cappa to be the cornet soloist with the **Seventh Regiment Band** in New York).

Rogers was clearly a man of talent and humble character. These virtues would be of use for him later in his career as in the recording business, where he would have to work with many temperamental soloists and musicians. Contrast this with the legendary problems in the Gilmore band between the various cornet soloists and the director. Jules Levi ("The Greatest Cornet Player Living") and Matthew Arbuckle ("The Great Favorite American Cornet Player") came to blows in 1879. Levi challenged Gilmore to a duel. The rivalry, egotism, and personal conflicts common to the history of the cornet, are completely missing from all accounts of the history of Clarke and Rogers. Clarke wrote, "Rogers was the most affable chap I ever met in my whole musical career [heretofore]" and "my ideal cornet player, whose ease in playing I was striving to imitate." Clarke also wrote that Rogers had "the most remarkable technic of any cornet player ever heard."¹

Rogers first joined Sousa in 1898 for one year as first-chair and solo cornetist filling in for Herbert L. Clarke for one year. He was 33 years old at the time. 1898 was the year of the Spanish American War. William McKinley was the president. In 1899 Rogers rejoined the Sousa Band as Sousa's assistant conductor and shared solo honors with Clarke on the European Tour. When Clarke left the band in 1902, Rogers became first-chair cornet and stayed with the band until 1904. He had been the cornet soloist for all of the Sousa Band engagements from 1899 till he left the band in 1904. Many other traveling bands also with enormous audiences. (Many coming from the Sousa Band.)

The band's purpose was **to entertain - (play concerts to people!) and not to educate**. They did however play works by leading composers of the time (including Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner, Berlioz). Many or most of these performances were for the first time in this country by any organization.

In a move that foreshadowed future trends, in 1904 Rogers gave up active performing to be recording engineer for Victor.

Recorded music - dance, orchestral jazz and later rock.

Mr. Sousa had a skepticism of recorded music, and published an article about "The Menace of Mechanical Music."²

In his several perorations on the "menace of mechanical music" Sousa deployed similar metaphors to equal effect. The pianola and the phonograph, he was sure, would reduce music to "a mathematical system of megaphones, wheels, cogs,

¹Clarke, Herbert L. *How I became a Cornetist*. St. Louis: Joseph L. Huber, 1934. Reprint, Kenosha: G. Leblanc Corporation, 1973.

² John Philip Sousa, "The Menace of Mechanical Music," *Appleton's* 8 (1906): 280

disks, cylinders, and all manner of revolving things, which are as like real art as the marble statue of Eve is like her beautiful, living, breathing daughters." To use these devices was to subvert nature in a world where naturalness and womanliness coincided with seeming ease; "The nightingale's song is delightful because the nightingale herself gives it forth." Sousa warned that these machines were like the recent "crazes" for roller skates and bicycles, but that they might do more damage, like the English sparrow, which "introduced and welcomed in all innocence, lost no time in multiplying itself to the dignity of a pest, to the destruction of numberless native song birds." Here were Sousa's metaphors adrift amid gender and national categories in their allusion to birds and description of musical culture. Women amateurs have "made much headway" in music, he wrote approvingly, but the mechanical music will make them lose interest, and "Then what of the national throat? Will it not weaken?" -- Sousa's American amateur loses some of her gender definition directly in his next question: "What of the national chest? Will it not shrink?" His rhetoric was extreme, but Sousa foresaw the diminishment of amateur music with great perspicacity.³

The rise of recorded music led to new problems for musicians who wanted to make a living wage. Similar issues arise today with Internet sharing of recordings at no cost. **ASCAP** was founded in 1914 to enforce the 1909 Copyright Act.

ASCAP used a blanket licensing agreement to collect a pre-set annual fee from anyone using its members' material for any commercial purpose. The money was divided among ASCAP artists. As major players in the radio industry became more interested in broadcasting recorded work, ASCAP reinforced its control over distribution. Artists who were not ASCAP members had little hope of exposing their work to wide audiences.⁴

Other factors leading to the decline of the professional touring Wind Band include:

Radio. - why pay to go to a concert when you can hear it for free?

Jazz and the smaller size of bands.- more exciting and current music - the concept of a top 40!

Dance Music.- music as a social - rhythmic experience - not only just to listen to.

The Great depression. Wars. - bands are expensive.

The trumpet rose as cornet fell in prominence following Louis Armstrong and the change in orchestral practice. (Compare Stravinsky's earlier and later works.) *Why would a serious student study an instrument you cannot make a living playing?*

³ Katz, Mark. "Making America More Musical through the Phonograph, 1900-1930." http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m2298/4_16/55849951/print.jhtml

⁴ Audio Recording: History and Development. <http://www.digitalcentury.com/encyclo/update/audiohd.html>

The Rise of school band programs. Pedagogical music.

The Modern Wind Ensemble started at the Eastman School of Music with the great Frederick Fennel. This ensemble had different programming needs, a different audience, and different players (than the professional touring bands.). As a part of a School of Music it did not need to pay for itself in the same way as a professional band. The programming needs were in an Academic context rather than purely aesthetic. Bands were to *educate* rather than simply to entertain and inspire. The *new was a major* value often of greater worth than the beautiful or expressive, memorable or understandable.

This is different from the school orchestras.

1. Professional non academic orchestras still exist. Bands really don't anymore. Even the Goldman Band is having a difficult time today.
2. The literature for band has featured many transcriptions now common to hear in their original form - both live and recorded and on radio.
3. By accident of history, much new music composed mid Twentieth century was complex and experimental and hence, did not have a large audience. This is also shown by the choice of programming most orchestras'.

The market and audience for bands influences entire band from its makeup, personal and programming.

The Orchestra traditionally served the elite and ruling classes. The Modern Wind Band started in the military - importantly, with the **Band of the Paris National Guard** at the end of the **French revolution**. There were contemporaneous movements in other countries such as England and in what would become Germany. *The audience was the masses. - Not the elite.* The programming tended to be accessible and exciting.

America's Military bands started at the time of the Revolution, and followed European models. Many or most of the musicians were from the "*old country.*"

Patrick Gilmore transformed the nature of the band. His band had a general audience - **it focused on all Americans** - and did not have the same explicit class distinctions of Europe. He did study work of the great bands of Europe. He raised the performance quality of his band as well as the literature played, and improved the literature it played. They played more transcriptions from the orchestral literature and fewer **Quick Steps**.

The roster of cornet soloists was amazing and included Levi, Arbuckle, Belstedt, and Herbert L. Clarke.

Style Points of Cornet Solos

Rubato

Stylistic use of rubato in the performance of the virtuoso cornet solos of the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries is required. As in jazz music with its swing, the rubato in the cornet solo is essential to its character.

Recordings of soloists from the turn of the Century show that there is not just one type of rubato. Performances were highly individualistic, but there is distinctive style.

With tips on recorded sound from internationally known expert Frederick P. Williams, I spent many hours listening to the sounds of Tom Clarke, Alice Raymond, Bert Brown, John Dolan, Herbert L. Clarke, and others. Each of these virtuosos had a distinctive style, but several general similarities can be found.⁵

At the end of his *Complete Celebrated Method for the Cornet*⁶, Arban writes that:

At that point, my task of professor (employing as I now do the WRITTEN instead of the SPOKEN word) will end. There are things which appear clear enough when uttered VIVA VOCE, but which cannot be committed to paper without engendering confusion and obscurity, or without appearing puerile.

There are other things of so elevated and subtle a nature, that neither speech nor writing can clearly explain them. They are felt, they are conceived, but they are NOT to be explained, and yet these things constitute the elevated style, the GRANDE ECOLE which it is my ambition to institute for the cornet, even as they already exist for singing and the various kinds of instruments.

Such of my readers as may wish to arrive at this exalted pitch of perfection, should, above all things, endeavor to hear good music, well interpreted. They must seek out, amid singers and instrumentalists, the most illustrious models; and this practice having purified their taste, developed their sentiments, and brought them as near as possible to the beautiful, may perhaps reveal to them the innate spark which may some day be destined to illumine their talent, and render them worthy of being, in their turn, cited and imitated in the future.

Vibrato

Vibrato is a highly individual technique that has roots in the production of sound in the singing human voice. The amount used by the performer is determined by the character of the music and the performer's taste. Arban's counsel to listen to singers and violinists leads one towards a style of vibrato not favored by contemporary trumpeters. Comparison of the vibrato, phrasing, and articulation of Mendez, Burke, and Dokshitzer with Schwartz and Andre illustrates this. There is a significant difference in the amount and type of vibrato favored in the orchestra and for the soloist, until very recently the orchestral trumpeter was cautioned against

Patricia Backhaus, *Cornet and Performance Practice: Learning from the Golden-Age Masters: Historic Brass Society Newsletter #7* (Fall, 1994) ISSN 1045-4594.

⁶Pg. 284. Arban's *Complete Method for Trumpet (cornet)* Edited by Edwin Franko Goldman and Walter Smith. Annotated by Claude Gordon Copyright 1982 by Carl Fischer. New York

the use of any. Harold Brasch writes that the brass choir of the orchestra performs with “straight tones.”⁷ Robert Nagel quotes Cecil Forsyth, who wrote in a 1946 edition that “On the unmuted brass there is no way of making the vibrato.”⁸ Hickman writes,⁹ “It is generally agreed that the modern orchestral concept of trumpets tone uses very little vibrato except for solo passages where well suited.”

Dynamics and Tone

There is a dispute currently raging over what the tone and character of the cornet should be. The British Brass Bands are often cited as providing the ideal character for the cornet. Forgotten by many today is the American tradition of solo cornet. From the era of Gilmore and Sousa through Goldman to the present, cornetists performed solos to great acclaim with full concert bands for thousands of people- without amplification. Cornetists had to play out with a full ringing tone. The smaller, unfocussed sound advocated by some is unsuited for this venue.

Form /Style

The principal types of solos for cornet include the polka, the theme with variations, the patriotic, the fantasy, and the exotic. Examples of the exotic would include such pieces as the Spanish Leonard Smith’s Spanish Caprice, Russian Jules Levy’s Grand Russian Fantasy, Irish Herbert L. Clarke’s The Harp of Tara, Walter Rogers’ Auld Lang Syne, and Scottish Jonathon Hartmann’s Blue Bells of Scotland, Middle European Vincent Bach’s Hungarian Melodies, Karl Hohne’s Slavische Fantasie, and German Jules Levy’s Du Du . Rogers’ By the Wigwam is an example of this genre - Native American “Indian”. The composer creates this effect through the use of war drums and characteristic melodic figures based on a pentatonic scale.

British Brass Band Movement

The British brass band has a rich and important tradition and history. It has gained prominence in the United States as the Concert Band has declined.

The most obvious differences are in instrumentation, performance venues, professional / amateur status of the band. equipment, makeup of the audience, style of performance (vibrato, tone, and articulation.)

The Salvation Army has (almost by itself) maintained the tradition of the composing performer. In times past many of the leading orchestral trumpeters were cornet soloist from the great bands. Now many of the orchestral trumpets are of were cornetist with the SA.

⁷Brasch, Harold T. “Producing Vibrato.” *The Instrumentalist* 12 (Feb.1958): 48-50

⁸Nagel, Robert. “Vibrato and style.” *The Instrumentalist* 15 (Mar. 1961) 80-82

⁹Hickman, David. *Trumpet Lessons with David Hickman*. 7

The author would like to invite everyone to compose music to play and teach to the world. It was a unfortunate occurrence when those who perform ceased to also compose. Look back at the almost every historic soloist and you are likely to find a library of pieces that were loved by multitudes of people and were fun to play.

**Dr. James L. Klages
School of Music
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma 73034**

Time line of Major American Cornet Soloists¹⁰

The United States has produced many accomplished cornet soloists since the early 1800s. In 1878 Arbuckle, Bent, Emerson, and Levy¹¹ were featured soloists at the same time in Patrick Gilmore's band. Arbuckle was born in Scotland. Bent and Levy were from England. Emerson was from Massachusetts. Never-the-less, foreign-born cornetists held many or most of the premier solo positions with the best-known bands. This was true through the entire time of the popularity of the professional concert band. The character of many of the soloists was similar to that of operatic sopranos which was sometimes exploited by promoters. Levy and others seemed to be vain and sensitive individuals. The public focus and competition among them led to publicized competition and publicity, and even an infamous duel between Arbuckle and Levy in Madison Square Garden in 1879¹²

Gilmore, Levy, Liberati, Bellstedt, and Arbuckle are examples of well-known and loved soloists born in other countries who came to the United States to live. They held the soloist chair in the leading bands in the country. Being European, or at the least accepted by the Europeans is a credential the American public seems to require - the exotic is admired. This attitude is applied to other areas of music including jazz. Great Jazz musicians also found this to be true, finding success and respect in France, the key to acclaim in the United States.

In the last half of the nineteenth century the cornetists who grew up in various parts of the U.S. were competitive with the best from anywhere. They tended to come from the oldest and largest communities at first. This is because this is where the bands were to be found. The first native-born cornetists are from Boston, Philadelphia, New Jersey, and New York. The Midwest came later as the country became more settled. Rogers was born in Delphi, Indiana in 1865, Williams was born in 1881 in New Richmond, Indiana, and Staigers was born in 1899 in

¹⁰Pioneers in Brass. Glen Bridges. CD-ROM. Colligo Corporation(2000)

¹¹Noble 1964, 23

¹²Schwartz 1957, 93

Muncie, Indiana. These and other American-born cornetists grew to be accepted by the public and by professional musicians. Herbert L. Clarke was born in 1867 in Woburn, Massachusetts.

Famous Cornetists By Birthplace:

Germany

- (1) 1827 Louis Schreiber (1827 - 1910) Coblenz, Germany
- (2) 1842 Theodor Hoch (1842 - 1906) Spremberg, Germany
- (3) 1858 Herman Bellstedt (1858 - 1926) Bremen, Germany
- (4) 1866 Emil Koenicke (1866 - 1930) Madgeburg, Germany
- (5) 1879 Gustav F. Heim (1879 - 1933) Germany

Italy

- (1) 1834 Carlo Alberto Cappa (1834 - 1893) Piedmont, Italy
- (2) 1847 Allesandro Liberati (1847 - 1927) Frascati Italy
- (3) 1883 Charles Anthony Cusumano (1883 - 1925) Santa Margherita, Italy
- (4) 1890 Joseph De Luca (1890 - 1935) Italy

Bohemia

- (1) 1875 Borhumar, Kryll (1875 - 1961) Horace, Bohemia

England

- (1) 1838 Jules Levy (1838 - 1903) London, England
- (2) 1841 Captain John Lathrope (1841 - 1918) Penzance, Cornwall, England
- (3) 1841 William Northcott (1841 - 1920) Devonshire, England
- (4) 1848 Benjamin C. Bent (1848 - 1897) Bamesley, Yorkshire, England
- (5) ???? Authur S. Whitcomb (?? - 1950) Birmingham, England

Wales

- (1) 1879 Edward Llewellyn (1879 - 1936) Wales

Scotland

- (1) 1828 Matthew Arbuckle (1828 - 1883) Lochside, Scotland

United States

Massachusetts

- (1) 1813 Henry F. Williams (1813 - 1903) Boston, Massachusetts
- (2) 1844 Thomas H. Rollinson (1844 - 1928) Ware, Massachusetts
- (3) 1845 Walter Emerson (1845 - 1893) New Bedford, Massachusetts
- (4) 1855 Mace Gay (1855 - 1935) Boston, Massachusetts
- (5) Walter Emerson (1856 - 1893) Massachusetts
- (6) 1865 Ernest Horatio Clarke (1865 - 1947) Woburn, Massachusetts
- (7) 1867 Herbert Lincoln Clarke (1867 - 1945) Woburn, Massachusetts
- (8) 1870 Milo Burke (1870 - 1949) Brockton, Massachusetts
- (9) 1891 Walter M. Smith (1891 - 1937) East Hampton, Massachusetts

(10) 1891 Charles Burke (son) (1891 - 1964) Brockton, Massachusetts

Indiana

- (1) 1865 Walter B. Rogers (1865 - 1939) Delphi, Indiana
- (2) 1875 Fred Jewel (1875 - 1936) Worthington, Indiana
- (3) 1878 Clay Smith (1878 - 1930) Greencastle, Indiana
- (4) 1881 Ernest S. Williams (1881 - 1947) New Richmond, IN
- (5) 1899 Delaware (Del) Staigers (1899 - 1950) Muncie, Indiana

Pennsylvania

- (1) 1816 Joseph G. Anderson (1816 - 1873) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- (2) 1854 William Paris Chambers (1854 - 1913) Newport, Pennsylvania
- (3) 1865 John Hazel (1865 - 1948) Bellefonte Pennsylvania
- (4) 1865 Anton H. Knoll (1865 - ??) Erie, Pennsylvania

Maine

- (1) 1874 David Rosebrook (1874 - 1937) Portland, Maine
- (2) 1880 F Lewis Horne (1880 - 1956) Cambridge, Maine (Bridges)
- (3) 1890 Florence Louise Horne (1890 - 1956) Cambridge, Maine (Cornet Compendium)

Louisiana

- (1) 1869 Frank Clermont (1869 - 1913) New Orleans, Louisiana
- (2) 1877 Charles Joseph (Buddy) Bolden (1931 - 1977) New Orleans, Louisiana
- (3) 1879 William Geary "Bunk" Johnson (1879 - 1949) New Orleans

Ohio

- (1) 1858 Louis F. Boos (1858 - 1935) Tiffin, Ohio
- (2) 1889 Frank Simon (1889 - 1967) Cincinnati, Ohio

New Hampshire

- (1) 1827 Henry C. Brown (1827 - 1912) Westmoreland, New Hampshire
- (2) 1867 Helen May Butler (1867 - 1957) Keene, New Hampshire

New Jersey

- (1) 1825 Thomas G. Canham (1825 - 1873) New Jersey

Vermont

- (1) 1853 Ezra Bagley (1853 - 1886) Albany, Vermont

Kentucky

- (1) 1858 Henderson Smith (1858 - 1923) Frankfort, Kentucky

Rhode Island

- (1) 1860 Bowen R. Church (1860 - 1923) East Greenwich, RI

Michigan

- (1) 1860 Walter F. Smith (1860 - 1937) Constantine, Michigan

Connecticut

(1) 1862 Alfred Weldon (1862 - 1914) Hartford, Connecticut

Kansas

(1) 1870 Perry G. Lowery (1870 - 1942) Topeka, Kansas

Alabama

(1) 1873 William Christopher Handy (1873 - 1958) Florence, Alabama

Wisconsin

(1) 1873 Guy Earl Holmes (1873 - 1945) Baraboo, Wisconsin

Mississippi

(1) 1877 Golds W. Houseley (1877 - 1906) Grandguff, Mississippi

Nebraska

(1) 1883 Mabel Keith Leick (1883 - 1961) Holdrege, Nebraska

New York

(1) 1934 James Francis Burke, Port Jefferson, New York

Iowa

(1) 1891 Ernst Pechin (1891 - 1946) Seymour, Iowa

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